

Serial No. 09/996,290
Amendment dated August 21, 2006
Reply to Official Action dated June 21, 2006

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REMARKS

The Official Action dated June 21, 2006, has been carefully considered. It is believed that the present Amendment places this application in condition for allowance. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

In the Official Action dated December 27, 2005, the Examiner indicated that pending claim 70 contained allowable subject matter. By the present Amendment, claim 70 is amended to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims as presented at the time of the previous Official Action. Further, by the present Amendment, claims 34, 44, 47, 55, 56, 68, 69, 71, 72 and 78 are cancelled and the respective dependencies of claims 33, 35, 39-41, 45, 46, 48-51, 54, 58, 60-62, 67, 73-77 and 79 have been changed from cancelled claims to pending claims. It is believed that these changes do not involve any introduction of new matter, and do not raise any new issues subsequent to final rejection, whereby entry of these amendments is believed to be in order and is respectfully requested.

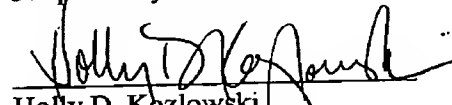
Claims 33, 35-43, 45, 46, 48-54, 57-67, 70, 73-77 and 79 are pending in the present application. The Examiner indicated in the Official Action of June 21, 2006 that claims 37, 38 and 57 are allowed. Applicants therefore submit that claims 35, 36, 38-43, 76 and 77 which depend directly or indirectly from claim 37 and claims 45, 46, 48-54, 58-67 and 77 which depend directly or indirectly from claim 57 are in prima facie condition for allowance. Finally, as it is believed that claim 70 is now presented in allowable form, it is further believed that claims 33, 73-75 and 79 which depend directly or indirectly from claim 70 are also in prima facie condition for allowance. In this regard, Applicants specifically request rejoinder of withdrawn claims 40, 51-54, 58 and 59, which had previously been withdrawn as relating to nonelected species, on the basis that generic claims from which they directly or indirectly depend are allowed. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

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In the Official Action, claims 33, 44-50, 55, 56, 60-71 and 77-79 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by the Tahi et al U.S. Patent No. 6,358,279. Claims 34-36, 39 and 76 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Tahi et al. Claims 41-43 and 73-75 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tahi et al and further in view of the Werblin U.S. Patent No. 6,413,276. These rejections are traversed. However, to expedite prosecution of the present application, claims 34, 44 and 68 have been cancelled and the remaining rejected claims have either been cancelled or amended to change their dependency directly or indirectly to allowed claims 37 or 57, or to claim 70 which is believed to be allowable based on the Examiner's previous indication of claim 70 containing allowable subject matter. Accordingly, the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102 and/or §103 have been overcome. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

It is believed that the above represents a complete response to the rejections set forth in the Official Action, and places the present application in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and an early allowance are requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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